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RELEASED IN PART

B1, 1.4(D)

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ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-15	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	C-01	DODE-00	HA-09
	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	SNP-01	SP-01
	SS-01	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00	/041W		
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R 192121Z FEB 92  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8479

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 01840

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PINR, VE  
SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] THE COUP ATTEMPT AND ITS AFTERMATH

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] BELIEVES THAT ANOTHER COUP IS A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY SINCE THE MILITARY HAS LEARNED JUST HOW FRAGILE AND UNPOPULAR THE VENEZUELAN POLITICAL SYSTEM IS. HE HAS FEW SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO HOW TO PREVENT A REPETITION OF THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 4, HOWEVER, OTHER THAN THE GENERALITIES OF CHANGING THE CABINET, FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND GOVERNING BETTER. [REDACTED] BELIEVES THAT EDUARDO FERNANDEZ IS THE POLITICIAN MOST STRENGTHENED BY THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE COUP ATTEMPT DESPITE THE

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EVIDENT SURGE IN RIVAL CALDERA'S POPULARITY. [REDACTED] HOPES THAT US MILITARY OFFICERS WILL POUND THE MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY INTO THE HEADS OF THEIR VENEZUELAN COUNTERPARTS. "WE ARE NOT AS DEMOCRATIC AS WE THOUGHT WE WERE," HE LAMENTED. END SUMMARY.

MEETING WITH [REDACTED]

3. POLOFF MET WITH [REDACTED]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON  
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)  
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 18 FEB 2017  
DATE/CASE ID: 28 JUL 2008 200503656

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INNER CIRCLE OF POLITICAL ADVISORS, ON FEBRUARY 18 TO  
DISCUSS THE FEBRUARY 4 COUP ATTEMPT AND ITS AFTERMATH.  
[REDACTED] COMMENTED AS FOLLOWS.

THE COUP LEADERS

4. [REDACTED]  
CONSPIRATORS, CHARACTERIZED THEM AS "NASSERITES WHOSE  
IDEOLOGY WAS A MIXTURE OF LEFTIST POPULISM AND FASCISM."  
HAD THEY WON, [REDACTED] THEY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE FORMED  
A GOVERNMENT REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO THAT OF VELASCO  
ALVARADO'S IN PERU. THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF THE COUP, IN  
[REDACTED] WAS THE CONSPIRATORS' GARGANTUAN  
AMBITION. LAMENTABLY, THE DEVASTATION WROUGHT ON THE  
VARIOUS INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES BY POOR LEADERSHIP AND  
ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION ALLOWED THE PLOTTERS TO PROCEED  
UNCHECKED. ONLY THEIR INEPTITUDE KEPT THEM FROM  
SUCCEEDING, [REDACTED]

THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

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5. [REDACTED] CHARACTERIZED THE COUP ATTEMPT AS A "POLITICAL  
AND CULTURAL DISASTER" FOR VENEZUELA. THE MILITARY HAS  
BECOME AWARE OF THE SYSTEM'S FRAGILITY AND UNPOPULARITY,  
[REDACTED] WHICH MAKES ANOTHER COUP ATTEMPT A  
DISTINCT POSSIBILITY IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT CHANGE  
CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND POLICIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE.  
UNFORTUNATELY, HE CONTINUED, THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN  
REACTING FOOLISHLY IN THE TWO WEEKS SINCE THE COUP  
ATTEMPT. THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS IS  
CAP'S ISOLATION AND CONFUSION. "HE HAS NO ONE LEFT TO  
TALK WITH EXCEPT EDUARDO FERNANDEZ," [REDACTED] "AND  
EVERYONE KNOWS IT." SPEAKING OF FERNANDEZ, [REDACTED]  
CONTINUED, HE WILL EMERGE FROM THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE  
COUP ATTEMPT AS THE SINGLE MOST STRENGTHENED POLITICIAN  
DESPITE THE TEMPORARY SURGE IN RIVAL RAFAEL CALDERA'S  
POPULARITY. [REDACTED] FREQUENT MEETINGS  
BETWEEN CAP AND FERNANDEZ, THE LATEST OF WHICH HAD  
OCCURRED THE PREVIOUS EVENING. [REDACTED]  
FERNANDEZ HAD BEEN URGING CAP TO MAKE SOME CABINET  
CHANGES, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] THAT AD

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ANTI-CORRUPTION FIGHTER LUIS PINERUA ORDAZ WAS

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UNINTERESTED IN REPLACING AVILA VIVAS OWING TO THE NEGATIVE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES ENTAILED IN ENTERING CAP'S GOVERNMENT AT THIS JUNCTURE. "WHO IN HIS RIGHT MIND WOULD WANT TO," [REDACTED] RHETORICALLY ASKED, ADDING THAT THIS RELUCTANCE COULD WELL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR CAP TO MAKE ANY CABINET CHANGES. AS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARIAT,

[REDACTED]

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COMMENTED THAT RANGEL SYMBOLIZED CAP'S ALLEGEDLY EXCESSIVE INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND LACK OF CONCERN FOR THE PLIGHT OF VENEZULANS. (NOTE: JEALOUSY AND A TOUCH OF MALE CHAUVINISM MAY SKEW [REDACTED] PERCEPTION OF RANGEL.)

**CORRUPTION**

6. [REDACTED] THAT FERNANDEZ WAS ALSO PRESSURING CAP TO DO SOMETHING TO BE SEEN TO BE COMBATTING CORRUPTION, IF

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R 192121Z FEB 92  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8480

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 01840

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PINR, VE

SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

ONLY NOTHING MORE THAN A FEW HIGH VISIBILITY TRIALS.  
COPEI IN ITS OWN RIGHT WOULD HENCEFORTH AVOID EVEN THE  
INDICATION OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THOSE WITH A CORRUPT IMAGE,  
STARTING WITH AD SENATOR DAVID MORALES BELLO. COPEI,  
ROMERO CONTINUED, WOULD REFUSE TO SUPPORT MORALES BELLO  
FOR PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS NEXT MONTH, EVEN AT THE PRICE OF  
BREAKING THE "INSTITUTIONAL PACT" WITH AD. ([REDACTED])

THE

"INSTITUTIONAL PACT" IS AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR  
PARTIES, AD AND COPEI, FOR THE DIVISION OF CONGRESSIONAL  
AND OTHER LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. IN CONGRESS, FOR  
INSTANCE, THE GOVERNING PARTY GETS THE PRESIDENCY OF THE  
UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE, POSSESSION OF WHICH AUTOMATICALLY  
CONSTITUTES PRESIDENCY OF THE INSTITUTION ITSELF. THE  
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OTHER PARTY, IN TURN, GETS THE PRESIDENCY OF THE LOWER  
HOUSE OR CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, AND SO ON.) ON THE OTHER  
HAND, [REDACTED] CORRUPTION WAS SO PervasIVE THAT  
ANY SERIOUS EFFORT TO EXTIRPATE IT RISKED THE REBELLION OF  
THE POLITICAL CLASS.

PERSONALITIES

7. [REDACTED]

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ATTRIBUTED A LARGE MEASURE OF THE BLAME FOR THE COUP  
ATTEMPT TO NOTED MAN-OF-LETTERS ARTURO USLAR PIETRI, WHO,  
AS TACIT HEAD OF THE SO-CALLED "NOTABLES," HAD STRONGLY  
CRITICIZED MANY ASPECTS OF VENEZUELAN POLITICS. "WHEN THE  
WISE MAN ACTS LIKE THAT," [REDACTED] "IT CALLS THE

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VERY LEGITIMACY OF THE SYSTEM INTO QUESTION." [REDACTED]  
CONTINUED THAT USLAR PIETRI WOULD NOT VOLUNTEER ANY NAMES  
WHEN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR RAMON ESCOVAR SALOM ASKS HIM TO  
SUBSTANTIATE HIS RECENT CHARGE OF WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION  
(SEE CARACAS 01728). "HE IS A COWARD," [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] CHARACTERIZED MIGUEL ANGEL BURELLI RIVAS, HEAD OF  
THE LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM AT SIMON BOLIVAR  
UNIVERSITY AND ANOTHER "NOTABLE," AS A PERSON SO FULL OF  
RESENTMENT THAT HE ENGAGES IN CRITICISM OF OTHERS AS A  
FORM OF SELF-CATHARSIS. AND PUBLIC PROSECUTOR RAMON  
ESCOVAR SALOM, [REDACTED] IS "SO AMBITIOUS AND

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RESENTFUL THAT HE WOULD DO ANYTHING IF HE WERE PROMISED  
THE PRESIDENCY," EVEN, PERHAPS, [REDACTED]  
BECOME THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF THE LEFTIST, RADICAL  
PARTY "CAUSA R" ("R" CAUSE; [REDACTED])

THE LETTER "R" DID NOT REFER TO ANYTHING. PARTY  
PROPAGANDA SOMETIMES HAS THE "R" STAND FOR "REVOLUTIONARY"  
OR "RADICAL." TAKE YOUR PICK. THE OFFICIAL NAME,  
HOWEVER, IS "CAUSA R.")

WHAT THE GOV SHOULD DO

8. [REDACTED] HAD FEW SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS IN REGARD TO  
WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO TO PREVENT ANOTHER COUP  
ATTEMPT BEYOND THE GENERALITIES OF MAKING CABINET CHANGES,  
FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND GOVERNING WELL. HE DID HAVE A  
SUGGESTION FOR THE U.S.G., HOWEVER. U.S. MILITARY  
OFFICERS, HE URGED, SHOULD POUND THE MESSAGE OF SUPPORT  
FOR DEMOCRACY INTO THE HEADS OF THEIR VENEZUELAN  
COUNTERPARTS AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. THIS WILL BE  
ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, HE  
OPINED, UNTIL THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE LOOMING  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (DECEMBER, 1993) HAS MADE ANOTHER  
COUP ATTEMPT BOTH IMPOSSIBLE AND UNNECESSARY PENDING THE  
DISCLOSURE OF THE IDENTITY OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT AND HIS  
PROGRAM.

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